Many in U.S. think they f

Those who may have Mayflower origins

Here are the percentages of Americans, broken down by various groups, who say "yes" to the question: "Do you think your family may be descended from one of the Pilgrims who came to America on the Mayflower?"

Entire nation — 25 percent
Men — 26
Women — 24

18-24 — 36
25-44 — 24
45-64 — 20
65 or older — 28
Northeast — 21
South — 27
Midwest — 25
West — 24

Lives in major city — 19
Lives in small city — 31
Lives in suburb — 18
Lives in rural area — 31

Protestant — 25
Roman Catholic — 21
Jewish — 12
No Religious Preference — 26

Attended church recently — 28
Not been to church recently — 23

Not a high school graduate — 28
Graduated high school — 30
Attended some college — 25
College graduate — 22
Post graduate studies — 20

White — 28
Black — 17
Hispanic — 14
Asian — 6

Married with children — 25
Married, no children — 26
Single with children — 21
Single, no children — 30

— Source: A scientific telephone survey of 1,015 adult residents of the United States conducted Sept. 22 through Oct. 11 by Scripps Howard News Service and the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University.

By Thomas Hargrove and Guido H. Stempel III
Scripps Howard News Service

A quarter of all Americans have Pilgrim dreams — a belief their ancestors may have walked the Mayflower's wooden decks and survived to celebrate that first Thanksgiving at Massachusetts' Plymouth Colony in 1621.

"So many of us have a family tradition, a belief that they are descended from the Pilgrims," said Caroline Kardell, historian for the General Society of Mayflower Descendants. "Sometimes the oral tradition is right, and sometimes it is wrong."

A survey of 1,015 adults in the United States conducted by Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University found 25 percent answered "yes" when asked: "Do you think your family may be descended from one of the Pilgrims who came to America on the Mayflower?"

The latest estimates provided by the Mayflower society suggest there are 35 million descendants worldwide of the 26 men who survived the harsh conditions of the Pilgrims' first Massachusetts winter. But the survey suggests nearly twice this number in the U.S. believe they have Pilgrim blood.

"It's hard to say how good these family traditions are," Kardell said. "Many people believe they were descended from (Pilgrim) William White, but that was a very common name back in those days."

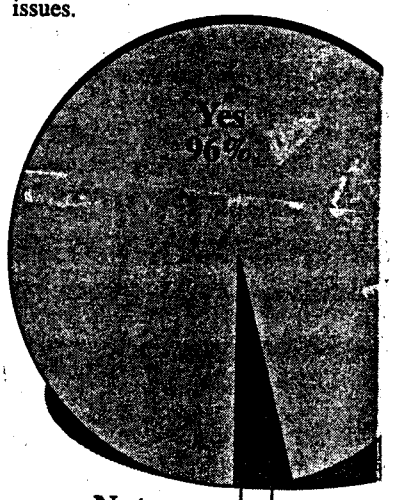
The survey found 96 percent of all adults usually celebrate Thanksgiving, making it the most universal holiday in America's richly diverse culture. Significantly fewer will celebrate Easter, Christmas or the Fourth of July.

Additionally, 56 percent answered "yes" when asked: "Do you think the original Pilgrims were the kind of folks you'd like to have as next door neighbors?" Thirty-one percent believe Pilgrims would be a detriment to the neighborhood; 13 percent were undecided.

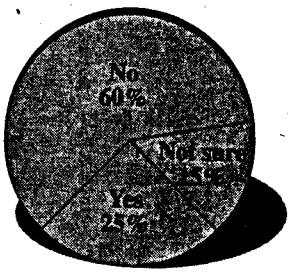
But attitudes toward the Pilgrims are intensely political. Conservatives and older people overwhelmingly like the notion of Pilgrim neighbors while young adults and liberals want to live in Pilgrim-free zones.

TurkeyTall

Scripps Howard News Service and Oh University asked adult U.S. residents s questions about their family and Thanks issues.



2. Do you think your family may be descended from one of the Pilgrims who came to America on the Mayflower?



Source: A survey of 1,015 adult residents of the United States by Scripps Howard News Service and the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University

"That has to do with a very, very common misconception," said Richard Maxwell, former governor general of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants. "Many people think of the Pilgrims of the Mayflower in the same way they think of the Puritans who settled in Massachusetts Bay 10 years later."

The Puritans were stern Calvinists, more inclined to be judgmental of others. Maxwell said it was these people and their descendants — not the Mayflower Pilgrims — who were responsible for the Salem witch trials that resulted in the execution of 20 people for suspected sorcery and devil worship in 1692.

"But the group that settled Plymouth was less judgmental.